

1/15/13

Dear Chairwoman Ingraham and members of House Local Government Committee,

During today's hearing on HB 410, Rep Washburn's bill affecting 3rd party voter registration drives, I was asked a question that I could not completely answer. The question was from Rep Wilmer, about the League of Women Voters' successful lawsuit against a similar law in Florida.

Here is more information:

When the state of Florida passed a law requiring among other things, for voter registration cards to be turned into the election office within two days, the League of Women Voters and other groups shut down their voter registration drives.

On May 31, 2012, Federal judge, Robert L Hinkle blocked enforcement of key provisions of the law.

"Voting is a right protected by several constitutional provisions; state election codes thus are subject to constitutional scrutiny. Together speech and voting are constitutional rights of special significance; they are the rights most protective of all others ... when a plaintiff loses an opportunity to register a voter, the opportunity is gone forever," wrote Judge Hinkle.

"And allowing responsible organizations to conduct voter-registration drives—thus making it easier for citizens to register and vote—promotes democracy."

Quotes from League of Women Voters of Florida et al vs. Kurt S Browning, United States District Court, Northern District of Florida, Tallahassee Division.

Linda Gryczan
Representing the League of Women Voters of Montana